Geoforum xxx (xxxx) xxx–xxx

Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

Geoforum

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/geoforum

Affective ecologies: Braiding urban worlds in Darwin, Australia

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ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:
Affective ecologies
Anthropocene
Race
Embodied thought
Darwin

ABSTRACT

Emerging research on Anthropocene urbanism shows a commitment to human-nature centred futures and environmental justice but fails to engage with the language of race. Thinking the Anthropocene through race, however, has the potential to decolonise dominant apocalyptic narratives of climate change and provide insights into imaginaries of diverse urban futures. This paper argues that such futures run through entangled Indigenous and Ethnic minority worlds in white settler cities but are often explored separately. To entangle these worlds, I introduce and develop the concept of affective ecologies or sentient embodiments of ecological interdependency grounded in everyday urban life. The paper draws on in-depth interviews, focus groups, archival photographs as well as participatory photographs/video/films taken by racialised Indigenous peoples, ethnic minority migrants, refugees and asylum seekers in Darwin, a tropical north Australian city. I braid stories of co-becomings with this Saltwater Country prone to anthropogenic climate change by focusing on two events – Loving Country and Listening to Old Man Rock. The findings provide new insights into urban cosmopolitics that calls for articulating, reassembling and co-composing plural modes of coexistence in the Anthropocene.

1. Introduction

Emerging research on Anthropocene urbanism makes an urgent call to think, know, see and inhabit, cities differently (Rose, 2015; Gibson et al., 2015; Amin and Thrift, 2017; Derickson, 2017; Alam et al., 2018; Houston et al., 2018). Such a focus is necessary to address the social, ecological and ethical challenges that have contributed to the advent of the Anthropocene, an era where 'man' has emerged as a geological force but also a 'plaything' of planetary forces that we agitate, reshape but cannot always control (Connolly, 2017, p. 7). It is crucial, however, to move beyond human exceptionalism with its focus on masculine universal man and white colonial heroes and inhabit the city through the art of life that is about 'becoming with' or co-becoming with 'earthly worlds of difference' (Haraway, 2016, p. 121; Amin and Thrift, 2017; Chakrabarty, 2017). Feminists such as eco-philosopher Plumwood (1993) and Science and Technology Studies (STS) scholar, Haraway (2016) have inspired scholarship on cities as sites of multispecies entanglements and becoming-worlds (Houston et al., 2018). But although these emerging valuable urban political projects of hope rather than anxiety conceptualise cities as more-than-human and are committed to environmental justice, the language is often unraced. Contemporary research on climate change, however, draws attention to the pervasive intensity of 'white affects' (Baldwin, 2016, p. 76) of fear, the widespread or 'aggressive imperialist force of race' (Saldanha, 2015, p. 327), environmental threats of racial capitalism, and 'Anthropocenic culturecide' (Tolia-Kelly, 2016, p.786) that endure, and have outcomes for the coexistence of diverse socio-ecological worlds and abundant futures, particularly in white settler cities (Sundberg, 2014; Collard et al., 2015).

Hage (2017) argues that Western/white racism (including its variant anti-Muslim racism) rooted in slavery, colonial capitalist domination as well as the domestication of the Other is an environmental threat because it reproduces a destructive mode of inhabiting the world. Pulido (2018) argues that racial capitalism is a form of state sanctioned environmental violence that devalues non-white bodies (Indigenous and ethnic-minorities) and non-white places. Tolia-Kelly (2016) underlines that it is Anthropocenic culturecide', a form of genoicide or a broader cultural force that excludes, erases, occludes and annihilates the potentialities of diverse human-nature centred futures. This paper argues that these human-nature centred futures run through entangled Indigenous and Ethnic minority worlds in white settler cities and provide the possibility to decolonise dominant apocalyptic narratives of climate change. These worlds, however, that seek to move beyond 'white eco-apocalyptic' (Gergan et al., 2018, p. 15) futures are often unintentionally explored separately in white settler societies (Head et al., 2018; Hinkson and Vincent, 2018). Perhaps it is the respect for Indigenous sovereignty, the desire to 'tap into' values and behaviour of ethnically diverse migrant populations to produce new insights into environmental thinking (Head et al., 2018, p. 15) or the whiteness of geography (and the Academy) (Pulido, 2018) that mediates the

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https://doi.org/10.1016/j.geoforum.2019.02.026
Received 27 November 2017; Received in revised form 22 February 2019; Accepted 26 February 2019
0016-7185/ © 2019 Published by Elsevier Ltd.

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segregation of these worlds. But it is also the overarching framework of settler colonialism that fixes the political subjectivity of racialised non-native people of colour with diverse migration histories (Kobayashi and de Leeuw, 2010; Pulido, 2018). Castree (2015) as well as Clark and Gunaratnam (2017) argue for new voices from Geography that can change the Anthropo(s)cene through diverse understandings of our planetary home. From my position as a mature-aged Australian woman geographer of Indian heritage and a first-generation migrant who struggles to inhabit or reproduce whiteness as a bodily orientation of mastery (Singh, 2018), it is relationships with a planetary home that nourish survival.

This paper explores a situated understanding of our planetary home through embodied thought grounded in everyday worlds inhabited by racialised Indigenous and ethnic-minority migrants of colour in Darwin (pop. 120,000), a tropical coastal north Australian city. This capital city (Northern Territory) with a history of complex race relations (Martinez, 2006; Martinez and Vickers, 2015) has the potential to provide new insights into addressing the challenges of the Anthropocene through a focus on these entangled urban worlds. In this paper I experiment with the concept of affective ecologies or sentient expressions of ecological interdependency to think the Urban Anthropocene through race in ways that have an ethico-political potential. These knowledges of the urban that 'linger on the skin and in the gut' (Amin and Thrift, 2013, p. xiv) in a city that exhibits increasing vulnerability to catastrophic tropical cyclones, extreme weather events, bushfires, as well as slower, creeping imperceptible threats of climate change such as global warming, sea level rise, ocean acidification and species loss (e.g mangroves, seagrass, shellfish, turtles, dugongs) expand the vocabulary of the Urban Anthropocene (Loughnan et al., 2013; Spencer et al., 2016). I seek to populate diverse worlds as well as imaginations through risky experimentation that moves beyond the language of sovereignty, disciplinary power and bio-politics (Stengers, 2010, 2015; Clark and Gunaratnam, 2017). Such a risk is necessary to explore urban worlds inhabited by socio-economically and/or racialised bodies who occupy a contradictory but dichotomous position of being both part of nature as well on the edges of human concerns for nature (Simpson, 2011; Tolia-Kelly, 2016; TallBear, 2017). Their embodied thought does not always satisfy the lust for authentic ecological knowledges and is yet to be taken seriously (de Castro and Skafish, 2014; Povinelli, 2016).

The paper is informed by archival photographs and several phases of fieldwork conducted in Darwin since 2011. It includes participant observation and informal conversations at public spaces including beaches, beach reserves, the foreshore, the esplanade and parks relevant to this paper. These places were sites for walks, social gatherings, picnics as well as more organised weekly/bi-weekly and annual events including football games, Asian-style open air markets, coastal festivals (Seabreeze Festival), ethnic-minority festivals (India at Mindil) and Caring for Country Ranger programs. Since my broad research agenda aimed to highlight difference and co-belonging in these public spaces, residents had the opportunity to shape the output and co-produce knowledge that went beyond 'talk' through participatory photography and in a later stage video-photography. The video camera with a side screen invisible to the viewer, enabled an optics that focused less on what the eye could see, and more on embodied engagements with place that went beyond 'talk' in English, a 'foreign' language for hvpervisible and disadvantaged Indigenous peoples as well as ethnic-minority migrants/newcomers, refugees and asylum seekers from countries in Africa, the Middle East and Asia. Films of more than 24 formal/informal events and walk-alongs were used to co-produce 15-minute films, 5-minute films and montages of urban life in Darwin that inform this paper. The films directly related to this paper include a coastal walk filmed by Indigenous Women Rangers and a walk along Casuarina beach by asylum seekers. The research program also included more than 100 in-depth interviews and 50 focus groups with short term residents (< 5 years), medium term residents (5–10 years and less) and long-term residents (> 10 years) of diverse cultural backgrounds including Anglo-Australians.

2. Darwin – The pearl of the Arafura sea and a survivor

The beachfronts and seascapes of tropical Darwin contribute to the city's growth as a tropical paradise, a strategic defence base, a rapidly expanding port, and a site for large offshore energy projects such as the INPEX Ichyths LNG plant. This city built on Larrakia or Saltwater Country, however, shows histories of multiple human and more-than-human trajectories across land and sea that predate white settlement, resource extraction and infrastructure projects (Gaykamangu and Taylor, 2014; Larrakia Nation Aboriginal Corporation, 2006; Martinez, 2006). The strong monsoon winds of the Timor-Arafura Sea brought proas (boats) with sailors from Makassar and Sulawesi who fished for trepang (sea cucumbers), learnt from Indigenous pearlers about undersea wealth and traded with the Larrakia, Woolner and Kungarakan peoples (Bauman, 2006; Martinez, 2006). These ways of life continued but were also adversely affected when vegetation was cleared for land surveys and the city of Palmerston (now Darwin) was established in 1869. With the discovery of gold and the establishment of the pearling industry in 1884, Chinese, Japanese, Indonesians, and Filipinos arrived as indentured labourers – through intermarriage a diverse polyethnic population began to emerge. Anxiety about the increasing mixed population, however, unfolded as dehumanising white supremacist acts of legislation – the White Australian Policy in 1901 and the Aboriginal Ordinance in 1911 (Martinez, 2006). The everyday life of a diverse Asian and Aboriginal population was regulated through policing the 'colour line' (Lea, 2014). Racialising assemblages that entangled, bodies, forces, ideologies and institutions 'created a hiearchy of 'full humans, not quite humans, and non-humans' (Wehliye, 2014, p. 4).

In Darwin, Larrakia who describe themselves as 'saltwater people' as well as Indigenous people of diverse backgrounds have memories of missionization, dispossession and dislocation. Their capacity to 'go on', survive and thrive, however, continues to be tested by interventionist government policies that aim to 'do good' but is experienced as racially discriminatory, dehumanising and disrespectful by Aboriginal peoples (Yolŋu Nations Assembly, 2012). However, when white supremacist policies unfold, it is the deep connection and sacred relationships with the land, sea, wind and living creatures that nourish love for the earth (Kimmerer, 2014; Lobo, 2014). As observed by Angela Last (2015) in the Caribbean, nature is more than a 'backdrop', an 'ornament', romanticised or essentialised, but a central figure in Darwin's history that show the intertwining of nature-culture relations. Life in the city during the wet season (Nov-Feb) has historically been entangled with strong monsoon winds, torrential rain and the arrival of tropical cyclones. The strong winds that historically enabled the arrival of boats with seafarers, traders and white settlers, has more recently brought asylum seekers from the countries in the Middle East, Africa, and Asia, many of whom once lived in Darwin's innumerable 'lodges', high security detention centres, or offshore carceral centres on the Indo-Pacific islands of Nauru and Manus. Devastating tropical cyclones that arrived suddenly in 1897, 1915, 1937 and 1974, damaged the built environment (Chinatown, Kahlin Compound and the Retta Dixon Home for Aboriginal peoples, Channel Island leprosarium), led to the loss of Aboriginal lives and circulated considerable trauma among residents of diverse ethnic backgrounds (National Archives of Australia, 2018).

Saltwater stories and heritage songs draw on polyethnic histories to celebrate Darwin as a survivor (Larrakia Nation Aboriginal Corporation, 2006). Among Larrakia people, *Dungalaba* or the dangerous saltwater crocodile is a totem and perceived as protector – the flesh is never eaten. Food from mangrove forests, the oceans and freshwater creeks nourished frugal lifestyles (Bourke, 2015). The lyrics of 'Arafura Pearl' composed by Kathy Mills, a Kungarakan elder (a respectful term grounded in age, experience and family membership), activist, poet and artiste, weaves a story of this place that has grown through physical and social turmoil. Darwin is an adolescent girl, a

multi-racial beauty who is “strong and patient” in the face of sorrow and destruction wrought by colonial dispossession and catastrophic weather events. I witnessed the tradition of using this song as a ritual of welcome to Larrakia Country at public events such as at art fairs, exhibitions, creative research events, festivals, protest marches and community vigils (Mills and Mills, 2015). These performances reiterate an affective triangular relationship or a sentient expression of ecological interdependency between visitors, traditional custodians of the land and Country (a place of ancestry, identity, language, livelihood and community) (Birch, 2016; Merlan, 2014). These relationships of interdependency co-compose the plurality of difference that runs through human and more-than-human worlds. Darwin emerges as a pearl that crystallises through secretions around a grit of sand that cannot be digested by the oyster. As a ‘jewel of Australia’, it disturbs the laminar flow of scientific reasoning and linear flow of time in climate change narratives if it contributes to an environmental unconscious or possibilities for being stitched, woven or braided into the world (Kimmerer, 2014; Carter, 2014; Last, 2015). Illuminating such a texture of co-composition is necessary in a city where the worlds of socio-economically disadvantaged Indigenous peoples, ethnic-minority, migrant, refugees and asylum seekers are expulsed from the mainstream urban collective with its vortex of capitalist urban accumulation (Brenner and Schmid, 2015; Harney and Moten, 2013; Merrifield, 2015).

3. Affective ecologies

Contemporary research on urban cosmopolitics in the Anthropocene call for inventing new concepts that can articulate, reassemble and co-compose plural modes of coexistence (Farias and Blok, 2016; Lancione and McFarlane, 2016). For Lancione and McFarlane (2016) such a cosmopolitics inspired by the work of Bruno Latour (2014) and Isabelle Stengers (2010), is attentive to the immanence of multiworlds and the diversity of assemblages that make up urban life, but often overlook a marginal cosmos. This section builds on the concept of ecology that surfaces within Science and Technology Studies (STS), Feminist Theory and Philosophy and encourages openness to such a marginal cosmos. Moving from the shifting interdisciplinary ground that intersects with Human Geography, I introduce and develop the concept of affective ecologies that decentres the human and distributes agency more widely (Haraway, 2016; Massumi, 2015). Through ecologies that are relational and interdependent, I entangle human/nonhuman entities in multiple assemblages with different timescales that vary in their intensity (Bell, 2012; Haraway, 2016; Massumi, 2015; Stengers, 2010). Stengers (2010) argues that these co-constitutive ecologies cannot be reduced to the activity of individuals or the product of their activities, but ingredients without which neither product or activity could exist. For Haraway (2016, p. 13) these ‘intertwined worldings’ are marked by affect (capacity for activity and responsiveness), entanglement and rupture through which diverse natures, cultures, subjects and objects emerge. Using the sensible practice of weaving, Haraway (2016, p. 1) draws attention to the knotted or connectedness of these ecologies that call out for making kin with more-than-human worlds through bodily ethical and political obligations of response-ability. These response-abilities that centre multispecies/interspecies thinking have the capacity to become viral and mutate apocalyptic stories that are told about the Anthropocene, a term whose meaningfulness Haraway (2016) questions and finds unthinkable because it focuses on the ‘anthropos’ or universal ‘man’. Aligning the Anthropocene with Kali Yuga (The Age of Strife), an apocalyptic epoch named after the Hindu goddess Kali disrupts this gendered or universal understanding (Klostermaier, 2003; Narayanan, 2018). These Hindu cosmologies in Majority (developing) Worlds enable us to tell different origin stories in exploring environmental values, but careful attention is also required so that non-western understandings of race reproduced through caste hierarchies, a Brahmanical social order and Hindu fundamentalism in countries like India do not erase other worlds (Menon, 2012; Rawat and Satyanarayana, 2016; Yusoff, 2018). In thinking of the coexistence-of these multiple worlds and unsettling the prominence of the Anthropocene, Haraway (2016) jokes and suggests the Chthulucene.

Affective ecologies provide the possibility to inhabit the Chthulucene a time-place of ‘staying with the trouble’ of getting on together on a damaged earth by learning to be truly present (Haraway, 2016). Haraway (2016) introduces the concept of sympoiesis to suspend dominant epistemologies and ontologies of life/non-life and argues for learning in a thick present through practices of ‘making with’, ‘worlding with’ and ‘becoming with’ more-than-human others on the earth. It involves an opening toward shadowy presences (human/more than human) that are irrelevant, unconsulted, ignored and therefore do not or cannot have a political voice even though they may affect the kinds of questions we ask and the solutions that can be found (Stengers, 2010). In north east Arnhem land, east of Darwin, Bawaka et al. (2016, p. 457) argue for attention to these local ecologies grounded in place and space that are often ‘ignored, belittled, singularized’ if they are not justified against Anglo, human-centred western ways of knowing. These ways of doing place and space through an ethics of care, central to Indigenous Yolŋu perspectives, resonate with research that focuses on the intimacy of ecological affects in urban areas in white settler cities, where racialised peoples bear the burden of climate change and the trauma caused by extreme weather events (Willox et al., 2013; Kimmerer, 2014).

In the small remote town of Rigolet along the Labrador coast, Willox et al. (2013, p. 16) focuses on ‘intense intimacy’ to explore the affective dimension of climate and environmental change. They develop the concept of ecological affect as ways of thinking, feeling and acting connected to other-than-human bodies and processes. Drawing on qualitative research with Innuit Indigenous peoples, Willox et al. (2013) argue that the greatest effect of environmental change will be felt in geographical areas prone to extreme weather events. Their qualitative research shows powerful, intimate, spiritual connections to country that centre love and mutual respect – the land is alive and ‘nature’ is like another person. Such connections with Country resonate with Michi Saagig Nishnaabeg thought on ‘ecological intimacy’ (Simpson, 2017, p. 8) among the salmon people in the town of Petersborough, eastern Canada. Leanne Simpson (2017), a Nishnaabeg scholar, writer, poet and musician argues that intimate webs of connection between plant, animals, rivers, lakes and the cosmos are relationships that flourish when we give more than we take from *aki* or the land. For Kimmerer (2014), an Anishinabekwe plant scientist from Eastern Canada, this is a relationship of love. She says:

> Knowing that you love the earth changes you, cultivates you to defend and protect and celebrate. But when you feel the earth loves you in return, that feeling transforms the relationship from a one-way street into a sacred bond. Kimmerer (2014)

In Darwin, Bill Neidjie (2007, p. 19), a Yolgnu elder from Arnhem land, Northern Territory, Australia speaks this language of ecological affect that centres a strong affective bond of interdependency with the earth and cosmos that is emergent, regenerative and sacred.

> Places for us, earth for us
> star, moon, tree, animal,
> no-matter what sort of animal, bird or snake
> all that animal same like us. Or friend that.
> (Bill Neidjie, Story of Feeling, 2007)

For Bill who lived for some time in Bagot, an Aboriginal town camp in Darwin, the earth, celestial beings, birds, animals, rocks, trees and wind listen, are kin that feel, and call out for respect and love. His language extends animacy to planetary bodies, the elements, living creatures as well as insensible rocks. This ‘language of animacy’ narrated through stories speaks love ‘from the chest not lips' and enables us to see ourselves as part of the Earth (Neidjie, 2007; Kimmerer, 2014,

Fig. 1. Larrakia Coastal Plant Use Walk - Videophotography by Larrakia Women Rangers.

p.59). Kimmerer (2014) calls for healing this relationship through braiding stories, ways of knowing (wisdom) and scientific knowledge that are always in tension but have the potential to co-compose something new through the practice of braiding.

4. Braiding Co-becomings in Saltwater Country

4.1. Loving Country

Indigenous peoples (who identified as blackfella mob) and ethnic minority migrants who had lived in Darwin for several years described themselves as "laid back, almost horizontal" even though they had lived through the trauma of tropical cyclones such as Cyclone Tracy that devastated Darwin on Christmas Eve, 1974. While such ways of life often racialise urban Aboriginals as lazy, idle, dysfunctional and irresponsible, "slowing things down" (Yusoff, 2013, p. 215) enables the emergence of new registers of sense that contribute to responsible co-be-comings. Such slowing down enables Kurt, a mature-aged Indigenous man who held several positions of leadership to argue that Darwin has always been an Aboriginal place. He says:

> Some of the principles of urban living have moved here, so we haven't actually become urbanised, we've always been here, we've never left.

Larrakia cultural protocols of care and respect emerge as everyday affective co-becomings grounded in local ecologies of urban land and sea country (Saltwater Country) even though Larrakia land rights are yet to be fully acknowledged (Day, 1994). For many Indigenous peoples, loving and feeling loved by Saltwater Country was nourishing when everyday life was a struggle. For example, Chelsea, a young Larrakia urban ranger and single mother felt sick when she was in 'remote' (regional) communities away from Darwin – she yearned to be back on urban Country. Sickness among Aboriginals in its 'holistic cultural, physical and psychological sense' (Birch, 2016, p. 94) comes from the lack of connection to Country and is a key determinant of health. Green et al. (2009, p. 1) argue that if Country is affected by climatic impacts and traditional owners are unable to fulfil their collective cultural responsibilities, they feel acutely sick. In Darwin, rangering is a practice that enables women like Chelsea to perform these responsibilities that embody Indigenous visions, values and protocols.

Rangering grew out of a community-based natural and cultural resource management movement, Caring for Country that emerged in Australia in the 1990s. The movement aims to address environmental challenges by braiding localised, experiential Aboriginal knowledges and western, scientific knowledges (Kerins, 2012). The focus is on embodied obligations of maintaining customary practices, participating in ceremonial life, protecting sacred sites, educating young people as well as engaging in research and development to ensure a culturally and ecologically sustainable future. In Greater Darwin, Larrakia urban rangers assume cultural, spiritual and environmental responsibilities to look after land and sea country – Darrinigi-Milagwalwa, Gunimitjandawa, Larrakia-Gwa. These responsibilities are evident during my conversation with Yvette and Gail, two Larrakia women and Shelley, a Yanyuwa woman as we sit at Stokes Hill Wharf, a heritage site where fishing, pearling fleets as well as naval vessels docked and were bombed by the Japanese in 1942. Later, we drive to Mindil beach where Yvette and Gail recount joyful stories of swimming, fishing and collecting 'tucker' (food) from the mangrove forests on family outings. They were frugal in collecting and eating longbum shellfish (*Danijarra* also known as 'poor man's tucker), cockles, mussels and periwinkles and always took only what their family could consume on the day. Shellfish has been part of the diet of Territory coastal Aboriginal communities for at least 2000 years (Bourke, 2015) but is less abundant today. 'Long grassers' or Aboriginals who 'live rough' in shady mangroves told convivial stories of how they boiled longbums in a billycan on the beach. As I sat with them while they roasted a bandicoot on the campfire, they regretted that due to the destruction of mangrove forests, they were limited to eating "dreary bush food". Yvette, Gail and Shelley spoke of the increasing pollution – they never fish or collect food from sites such as Mindil beach revered as an Indigenous sacred burial site but also well-known for its Asian-style bi-weekly open-air market, beachside luxury hotels and the Darwin casino. They take turns in using a video camera as we move along the Larrakia Coastal Plant Use Walk, an initiative of the women rangers (Fig. 1). Gail alerts me to two large signboards with information about the Walk and says:

> There's a lot of writing about the white history and people from Timor crossing the Ocean.

Rather than focus on white settlement, Yvette expresses love and humility while showing me the brightly coloured poles that she and her cousins painted along the Walk. The artwork provides information about how Indigenous people were nourished by plants used for medicines, ceremony, food, art, cooking and everyday living. She says:

> Well some of our cousins put some artwork on it and on top they put the little plaque that this is a Larrakia Coastal Plant Use Walk. This is a Hibiscus and Lalwa is the Larrakia name. There's about 12. They're placed all along the walk. This one is the Pandanus (Fig. 2).

Larrakia Coastal Plant Use Walk
Pandanus spiralis
Pandanus Dparrum;a
leaves are used to make the hard, baskets and mats.
Seeds from the woody fruit are cooked and the
white base of new leaves tastes like cooked cabbage.

Fig. 2. Pandanus - Videophotography by Larrakia Women Rangers.

Kimmerer (2014) argues that plants offer gifts from the land that must be reciprocated through caring for the earth that moves beyond white settler imaginaries of land as property, capital or natural resource. On the beach these co-becomings with the earth are shared as well as exchanged through casual conversations with ethnic-minority visitors and migrant newcomers including refugees and asylum seekers. Through organised walks with school children and NGOs that work with asylum seekers and refugees, Aboriginal knowledge and ethnic knowledges of Saltwater Country are placed in the present and emerge as more than static traditions of thought. This weaving of intimate relationships with the elements, plants, animals and sea creatures enable Indigenous people to struggle with anger and sadness when they sense their ways of life are "slowly dying out". Walking among the mangroves and listening to stories about *Dungalaba*, the saltwater crocodile took me home across the ocean to the Indian Sundarbans where anthropogenic climate change threatens the diversity of mangrove forests, and crocodiles as well as tigers have emerged as endangered species (Ghosh et al., 2018). For asylum seekers like Hakeem and Salman, young men who had made long risky journeys by boat from Myanmar, it was frugal, careful practices of fishing with hand-woven nets at Lee Point beach that prompted the exchange of embodied knowledge. Through gestures and casual conversations, they learnt about the daily tides, habits of dangerous saltwater crocodiles and shared catch (including barramundi and jellyfish) with 'long grassers' or Aboriginals who 'live rough'.

Embodied thought grounded in everyday urban life enabled young rangers in the Larrakia Seaforce to work with scientists as well as divers from government organisations and private corporations. They left the wharf at 4am and were often out for 18 hrs engaged in different projects that included monitoring dolphins, surveying/photographing sea grass (the main food for dugongs *damidangga-la* and sea turtles), spotting 'salties' (saltwater crocodiles) and ensuring the safety of divers repairing damaged pylons of submersible platforms that were part of the INPEX LNG plant. Linda, a young ranger expresses intensities of joy, love and response-ability. She said:

> It's good, it's fun, it's something different; I've never done anything like it before. You see them [dolphins] playing. So they get the sea sponges off the bottom of the ocean and they throw it around, and you see them do jumps and stuff. So, we also see like turtles and dugongs, and that, and we rescue animals that are injured. I love it. I love the fact that I started work a few months ago and didn't know nothing about anything that I'm doing now. And now, to this day, I can say that I've done water testing, I've actually used these devices, and hopped on a boat, and I'm driving boats and talking on radios and getting connections out there between different people.

Linda enjoyed being in the middle of the ocean because she had grown up inland, learned her language from her nana (grandmother), collected bush tucker, but never had the opportunity to be on Sea Country.

Shelley, who described herself as "born and bred" in Darwin grounded Larrakia cultural protocols of responsibility and love in the turbulent tropical Arafura Sea. She said:

> I do like land stuff, but I like the water stuff more. A bit bumpy, back is sore, my stomach feels like its cramping with all the rocking. Just being out in the water and openness I don't know, sea breeze and everything.

Shelley attended a training program in Cairns, Queensland where she learnt about turtle species, their food, habitat, nesting practices and how to rescue animals injured by boats. While many tourists often see injured turtles washed up on the shore or engage with turtles through Darwin's well-known harbours cruises, women rangers like Shelley entangle scientific knowledge that often uses 'a 'language of distance' (Kimmerer, 2014, p.49) and hierarchies of animacy, with Larrakia love for Country. As I walk with Shelley, she senses the presence of turtles along the high tide line at Lee Point Beach. She said:

> There are turtles out here somewhere. They come up further down here and lay their eggs. I don't know the location, but I know it's along this area somewhere.
> The temperature of the sand determines whether the turtles are going to be male or female. They are about 7 metres down.

Coastal walks with newcomers like me as well as stories about Country at Stokes Hill Wharf, Lee Point, Mindil beach and Buffalo Creek, show that rangering is more than environmental work in an urban setting (Kerins, 2012). Rangering is a set of diverse socioecological practices that contribute to the emergence of new urban registers of sense, that may not fit within public understandings of the Aboriginal 'high culture' of Dreaming and Territoriality' (Merlan, 2014, p. 305). These new registers of love for the urban are infectious and contagious in the way they contribute to 'becoming with' more-than-human worlds in Darwin, a city with an increasing population of ethnic-minority migrants, refugees and asylum seekers. Given ongoing as well as intersecting public/popular debates on the challenges of urban population growth, migration and climate change in Australian cities (Crowe, 2018), conversations with some long-term residents in Darwin suggest that 'white affect' (Baldwin, 2016, p. 84) or fears and anxieties about ethnic-minority migrant newcomers might fit neatly into racialised discourses that focus on their lack of responsibility to local ecologies in a country away from 'home' in Asian cities. Gergan et al. (2018, p. 1) argue that the global crisis heralded by arrival of the Anthropocene reveals these 'deep-seated fears of racialized others taking over the planet and the decline of white civilization', that need to be unsettled. Learning how to listen to Indigenous creation stories and the spirit of the earth in a new country might be a good starting point for entangling the worlds of ethnic-minority migrants and Indigenous peoples who have different histories and geographies of displacement and dispossession.

4.2. *Listening to Old Man Rock*

During in-depth interviews and focus groups, I listened to stories told by refugees and asylum seekers who struggled to belong or love a new country. However, when I asked Salman, an asylum seeker and a keen football player to use a video camera and talk about everyday life, he asked me to accompany him on a walk along the sandy Casuarina beach around 2 pm on a hot summer day. We were perspiring, I drank a lot of water, but Salman could not quench his thirst – it was Ramadan and his day of fasting had started at 5am and would end at 6.40 pm on a long summer day. While we walked toward the beach in the early afternoon, he asks me to be quiet and listen. We hear the ambient sound of chirping birds but also animated chatter in Aboriginal languages from 'long grassers' camping in a shady grove.

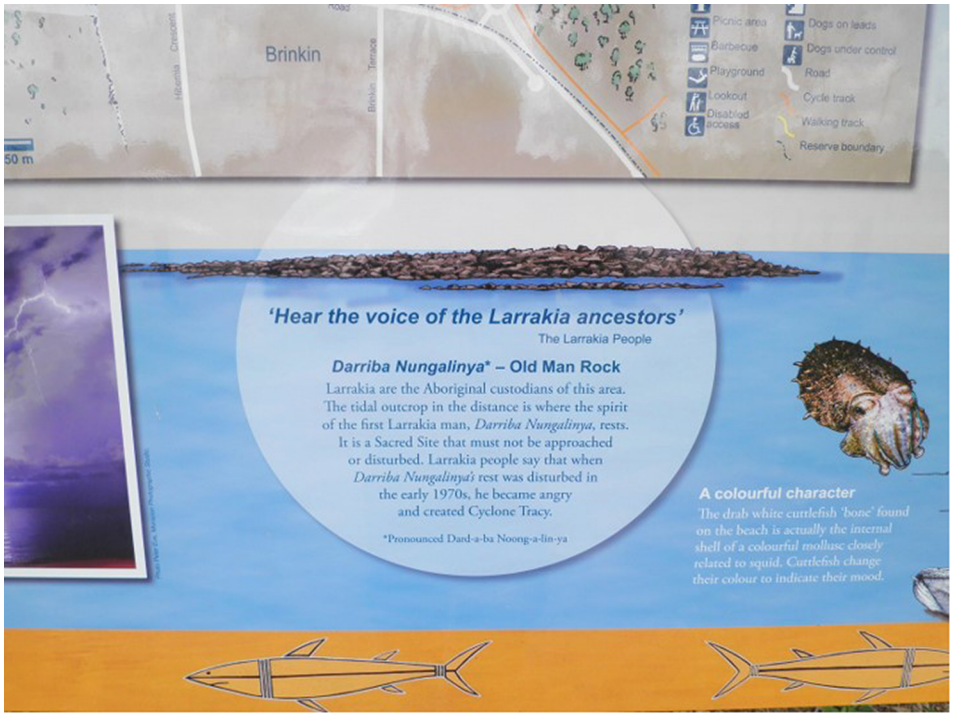
Brinkin
50 m
Picnic area
Barbecue
Playground
Lookout
Disabled access
Dogs on leads
Dogs under control
Road
Cycle track
Walking track
Reserve boundary
'Hear the voice of the Larrakia ancestors'
The Larrakia People
Darriba Nungalinya* – Old Man Rock
Larrakia are the Aboriginal custodians of this area. The tidal outcrop in the distance is where the spirit of the first Larrakia man, Darriba Nungalinya, rests. It is a Sacred Site that must not be approached or disturbed. Larrakia people say that when Darriba Nungalinya's rest was disturbed in the early 1970s, he became angry and created Cyclone Tracy.
*Pronounced Dard-a-ba Noong-a-lin-ya
A colourful character
The drab white cuttlefish 'bone' found on the beach is actually the internal shell of a colourful mollusc closely related to squid. Cuttlefish change their colour to indicate their mood.

Fig. 3. The Story of Old Man Rock- videophotography by Salman.

As we walked toward the beach, Salman focuses the video camera on the signboard and says, "You can see all the things here" (Fig. 3). For an Australian of Indian heritage, the blurb seems to call out to me 'Hear the story of the Larrakia ancestors'. There is a site map, a location map, photos of the 'fiery red' sunset and the night sky split by forked lightning. There is a sketch of a rock with the rising tide and a picture of a cuttlefish, a colourful mollusc whose bones are found along the beach. A painting by an Aboriginal artist underlines that animals shown on signboards within the reserve were created by *Durrula,* the rainbow serpent and are painted with coloured ochres from the Dripstone Cliffs that abut against the sandy beach. The large blue signboard tells the story of Darriba, the first Larrakia man whose spirit rests at Old Man Rock and underlines that when his rest was disturbed, he showed his anger by unleashing Cyclone Tracy that devastated Darwin in 1974. This weather apocalypse' (Simpson, 2013, p. 19) was traumatic for many residents of diverse backgrounds such as Norma, a mature aged Aboriginal woman of Chinese and Anglo heritage, whose younger infant sister did not survive. Renu, an Australian woman of Indian heritage relives the trauma.

> Renu: The cyclone was in 74. What a traumatic thing it was. We were like in a dilemma you can say. The water was going 6 inches up and down and when it was going up it will pour like anything inside the. Sanjay was just a baby and Neela was two years of age. And we had just come back from India. So without knowing, without any preparation, luckily we had a big torch and a tarpaulin, and all that you know. We just put lots of mattresses and everything, and both the babies were underneath the tarpaulin. Whatever was in the cupboards or the fridge, each and everything were lost.

Many long-term residents leave Darwin because of the increased frequency or intensity of heatwaves and cyclones, but Renu and Norma expressed reluctance to move to the cooler south. We feel this intense heat that is exacerbated by blasts of strong wind at the beach. Salman focuses the camera on the sandy beach, the sea that dazzles in the bright sun and the shadowy silhouette of Old Man Rock (Fig. 4). The tropical sea brings back memories of long, risky journeys with his elderly parents in search of freedom and dignity. But everyday life in community detention (his father was yet to be released from high security detention) is a painful and suffocating existence that resonates with Indigenous peoples who feel caged in white settler societies such as Australia and Canada – 'each day is the same, nothing ever happened, nothing ever changed' – (Simpson, 2013, p. 98). Simpson (2013) uses the story of a gidigaa bizhiw (spotted lynx or bobcat) in the zoo to provide insights into such existence. She argues that when the body aches, there is desperation and feelings of drowning, it is simple pleasures of embracing connection in the middle of disconnection that enable the cage to fade into the landscape. Like Salman, many asylum seekers feel racialized and alienated in Australia as 'illegal' arrivals, 'potential terrorists', welfare-dependents and hypervisible minorities who increase population pressures, resource use and heighten anxieties about the threat of climate change. For Salman daily walks along Casuarina beach, the presence of lived Aboriginality through voices, encounters, stories, and the material presence of Old Man Rock were simple pleasures or gifts from the earth that enable him to 'buffalo on' (Simpson, 2013, p. 85; Kimmerer, 2014). Larrakia people in Darwin who identify as urban blackfellas 'buffalo on' too by using their knowledge to educate people about Aboriginal lifeworlds that involve listening to the earth.

Larrakia people feel the presence of the Rock – the rock listens to them, smells them as they pass by and protects them (Povinelli, 2016). It marks a Dreaming site that embodies the spirit of Darriba Nungalinya, a primeval hybrid being (part human and part nonhuman) with superpowers who moved across the land, waters and sky (songlines) in and around Darwin. Larrakia people call him ancestral Grandfather or Grandfather Rock and his presence in the landscape is a reminder that the spiritual and physical realm are connected (Rawlinson, 2012) As he lies there quietly, residents show respect by not venturing very close to the rock, sitting on it or fishing in the surrounding area. Larrakia people believe that Cyclone Tracy was a response to disrespectful fishing practices, disregard of Indigenous land rights (the Kenbi land claim) and the continuing use of sacred sites for bombing practice (Rawlinson, 2012). The story has spread beyond Darwin as well as through the academy through the documentary film *Blown Away* produced on the 40th anniversary of Cyclone Tracy (MacLean, 2014; Povinelli, 2016). Elders fear that expanding residential development along Darwin's foreshore as well as megaprojects in the East Arm of the harbour might anger Darriba again.

Fig. 4. Old Man Rock visible at low tide- videophotography by Salman.

It is the 'insensible nature' or the Rock which appropriates sense even though it appears dormant, dead, inorganic and lacking agency that challenges taken-for-granted frameworks that constitute such knowledge as non-knowledge, unsettles the binary of life/non-life and provides fresh insights into urban affective ecologies (Povinelli, 2016; Yusoff, 2013). Larrakia worlds unsettle habits of thought that see matter as 'dead stuff' (Bennett, 2010) and together with everyday stories of place, hunting, and relationships with human/more-than-human entities that are part of co-evolving worlds they contribute to a "significant body of knowledge" (Kurt, Interview). Kurt regrets that such knowledge that focus on a more-than-human urban ecology continues to face cultural erasure because many urban blackfellas no longer speak Gulumirrgin, the Larakkia language. The outcome is that the language of stories, songlines, rituals, ceremonies that communicates non-anthropocentric knowledges of co-becomings is subject to continuing culturecide (Tolia-Kelly, 2016). Kurt works approximately 6 days and 58 h a week to ensure Larrakia cultural protocols are followed on energy megaprojects in Darwin harbour that provide employment and improve the quality of life Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders. But Kurt is also ambivalent about stories of Old Man Rock that call for protecting the harbour if disadvantage is deepened. Indigenous scholar Birch (2016, p. 96), argues that re-balancing the sacred-spiritual aspect of Country and the potential economic benefit from mining/energy projects that contributes to global warming, often contribute to 'burden-some layers of responsibility' and decisions made under duress. Rather than deepening disadvantage that can sometimes be an outcome of environmental protection, Birch (2016) calls for material benefits for Indigenous peoples that are necessary to secure diverse economic and cultural futures.

Imaginaries of such futures resonate with intensities of joy grounded in simple pleasures of dancing in the rain, fishing and listening to stories told by Elders. As we walk along the beach, Shelley, a young Larrakia ranger looks out towards the offshore reef, visible at low tide popularly known as Old Man Rock and says:

> There are about 20 different sacred sites and places that are significant to the Larrakia people and these places have formed into mythical stories surrounding them. There's always been that relief for Aboriginal People because there is significance behind ourstory. Our rock like Old man Rock are significant to Larrakia people. I think when you sit down and listen to someone who will tell you that story you kind of look at the Rock or Country and think that must be true. Stories [are important] whether people believe it or not.

Within Indigenous knowledge systems in Australia, seascapes are rich in cosmological meanings, they are spiritscapes that were traditionally engaged with through maritime ritual performances (McNiven, 2008). There are many registered and recorded sacred sites (eg. rocky outcrops, waterbodies) along the west coast of Shoal Bay Peninsula, the site of Darwin city as well as the Cox Peninsula across the harbour to the west. As a sacred site, Darriba Nungalinya (Old Man Rock), the large flat black rock at the entrance of Darwin harbour clearly visible at low tide is well known to residents of diverse backgrounds who stroll, run, cycle, walk their dogs or barbecue at the Casuarina Coastal Reserve.

5. Conclusion

This paper entangles Indigenous and ethnic minority Worlds in Darwin that decentre the universal figure of the anthropos in the Urban Anthropocene. It highlights diverse modes of human/more than-human existence that blur the boundary between life that is sensate matter and nonlife that is insensible (Povinelli, 2016). By braiding everyday stories of Old Man Rock and Caring for Country, threads from co-evolving human and more-than-human worlds come together to produce a fabric of co-belonging and co-becoming that resonate in the here and now. This here and now or the immanence of many urban worlds contributes to the thickness of the present that blurs the linearity of a singular human time with a past, present and future. Time is knotted in the materiality and texture of the fabric of polyethnic Darwin, the pearl of the Arafura Sea that is a symbol of beauty, strength, patience and survival in the face of turbulence – climatic catastrophes, slower imperceptible environmental changes and the aggressive imperialist force of race.

The paper thinks the Anthropocene through race by showing how the entanglement of Indigenous and ethnic-minority worlds mutate racialising assemblages (Wehliye, 2014). I expand understandings on ecological interdependency central to Feminist STS Philosophies by drawing attention to the diversity of Indigenous Yolŋu perspectives, Innuit perspectives as well as Michi Saagig Nishnaabeg and Anishinabekwe thought on feeling and intimacy with celestial beings, the elements and/or more-than-human kin. These intimacies are central to Larrakia creation stories, ways of life and more-than-human encounters in Darwin that contribute to learning, relearning, performing and the relaying of response-ability care, joy, love and humility. For example, encounters with migratory living creatures of the sea as well as shellfish and plants that are part of the Larrakia Coastal Plan Use Walk constitute affective ecologies that entangle intensities of care, joy, love and humility in ways that mutate the trauma of catastrophic disasters, displacement and dispossession. Attention to the diversity of plant and animal species and the lives of turtles, dolphins, crocodiles (Larrakia totem), dugongs, seagrass, pandanus and hibiscus that are

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threatened call for unsettling bodily orientations of white mastery that have contributed to the advent of the Anthropocene.

This paper has paid careful attention to knowledges that are occluded, overlooked or forgotten in discussions of the Anthropocene. It includes embodied knowledges gleaned from poems, songs, creation stories, interviews, walk-alongs and videos taken by residents who are racialised. Such knowledges are important to explore if we are to invigorate theoretical approaches to an ethics and politics of co-becoming with the earth that goes beyond reasoning, rationality, negative critique and moralising judgements. By opening up the city and our limited human world on to the scale of the earth (land and sea) and the cosmos as a source of cultural renewal, these experimental methods provide the opportunity for a range of political voices to be heard, that are more than mute, even though they may not be speaking subjects. Walk-alongs that leave footprints in the sand alert us to the traces left behind by other creatures who we share this world with – shells on the beach and turtle tracks lure us into this world. In this paper images and words work together to try and capture the touch, sound, smell and tacit understandings that comes from intimacies with urban Country that is both land and sea, Such knowing, however, can be a burdensome responsibility for racialised Indigenous peoples and ethnic-minority residents who inhabit worlds of deep socioeconomic disadvantage. The lure of a well-paid job, home ownership and a comfortable life is something urban residents aspire to achieve when everyday life is a struggle that involves frugality. These tensions are evident when Kurt, a Larrakia man argues for economic development and the continuing support for energy megaprojects in Darwin. He says:

> We're no different to any other group in the world, whatever colour it is. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Aboriginal and Torres Islander people non-Aboriginal Torres Islander people It's a quality of life they're looking for. It creates opportunities around employment, safety, security, enjoyment of life, relationships, health, all of that.

Although Aboriginal elders are keen for survival that can 'bridge the chasm' between different worlds, a planetary politics that entangles landscapes and seascapes runs the risk of mainstreaming Indigenous knowledges systems (Gaykamangu and Taylor, 2014; Lobo, 2015). But it is 'long grassers' or Indigenous people who 'live rough', have a frugal lifestyle and speak Indigenous languages who refuse such survival. Their struggle to bring together Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal worlds in the midst of trauma and disadvantage is alleviated temporarily through intoxication. Although they demonstrate responsibility through life skills and practices of fishing and collecting dwindling, meagre supplies of bush food, they are urban Aboriginals who are 'moved on' by the police and therefore ironically seen as lacking the capacity to care for Country.

The paper provides grounded empirical understandings of geo-social entanglements that express protection and respect for Country that might seem insensible. The shadowy presence of Old Man Rock, an offshore reef that appears and disappears with the rising tide is a feature of the seascape is not part of pristine Edenic nature that inspires poems and songs of beauty. Within Creation stories of ecological interdependency, Old Man Rock is a protector, a relative and a grandfather who watches over Darwin, calls for respect and is prone to anger when his rest is disturbed. The unleashing of such anger is embodied through Cyclone Tracy that complicates the story of nature as an inert entity and the mastery of 'man' in addressing the social, ecological and ethical challenges of the Anthropocene. The Rock that might appear insensible to 'man' is part of an ecology that brings together living and non-living worlds and it is the nourishment of these diverse worlds that is central to co-becoming. These co-becomings do not centre events of autopoiesis or autonomous understandings of the bounded human committed to self-maintenance, but possibilities for what Haraway calls 'staying with the trouble' of getting on together in the Anthropocene. In this paper, the entangling of Indigenous and ethnic minority worlds disrupts identity politics and the tense of time that places the indigene in the past, the migrant in the future but places the authoritative white settler capable of 'mining' or mediating traditional knowledge in the thick present (Povinelli, 2011). Through practices of listening, loving and braiding that decentres bodily orientations of white mastery, marginal' worlds articulate, reassemble and co-compose urban cosmopolitics.

Acknowledgements

This research was funded by an Australian Research Council Discovery Early Career Researcher Award (DE 130100250, 2013-2016). Special thanks to the participants, Larrakia Nation Aboriginal Corporation, Multicultural Council of the Northern Territory, Darwin Asylum Seeker Support and Advocacy Network, Darwin Community Arts and the Northern Institute, Charles Darwin University, Australia. Thanks Kaya Barry, Madeline Wilmot, Johanna Funk and David Kelly for creative video editing and ongoing conversations.

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